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## ASTRONOMERS PREPARING FOR A VOYAGE TO JAPAN.

NEW YORK, December 3.—Professor DAVID TODD, of Amherst College, was aboard ARTHUR JAMES' schooner-yacht *Coronet* to-day, attending to the stowing away of the astronomical apparatus which he and his associates will make use of in their observations of the total eclipse of the Sun, on August 9th, from Akeshi, on the Japanese island of Yezo. The greater part of the apparatus which the *Coronet* will carry around the Horn on her trip to San Francisco, where Mr. JAMES and Professor TODD and their friends and fellow-workers will board her, was put away in the hold, and the rest of it was placed in the cabin.

The schooner will sail Thursday, and when the dispatch comes from San Francisco that she has arrived there, the members of the expedition will leave the East by rail to start from the Golden Gate on their cruise of several thousand miles over the Pacific Ocean.—*S. F. Chronicle*.

## A SECOND CHAPTER OF HELIUM.

Three months ago we recorded the exultation of astronomers over the identification of "Helium"—the "running to earth," as Lord Kelvin neatly expressed it, of the problematical element which makes itself so conspicuous in the spectrum of the solar prominences, and in many notable stars and nebulae, while keeping most furtively concealed on our own planet. For a time some justifiable skepticism as to the validity of the identification remained, on the ground that a single line in the spectrum, even  $D_3$  itself, could hardly give evidence sufficient to warrant a confident conclusion; but the lingering incredulity was soon dissipated when observers found in the spectrum of the new gas half a dozen other lines corresponding to certain lines in the prominence-spectrum which had remained hitherto unidentified, like  $D_3$  itself, and had been supposed to have the same origin.

It was with something like consternation, therefore, that in June astronomers received the announcement from RUNGE, an eminent German spectroscopist, that, in the spectrum of the terrestrial gas, the line assumed to be identical with  $D_3$  is *double*, and that unless  $D_3$  itself is also double in the chromosphere spectrum the identification must be given up. Of course, the solar observers at once began to study the line most carefully,—at first without success; but before the month closed a brilliant